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The Gull

Golden Gate Audubon Society Newsletter
Volume 76 • No. 2 February 1994

Threats to Eastern Alameda County

**Burrowing
Owls and
Japanese Wet-
lands Activists**

**February Field
Trips**

**Back Yard
Birder**

**News from the
Ranch**

Observations

Our sincerest apologies. We were on the late side getting to the printer last month, but *The Gull* was in the mail on January 6. As of January 20, some of our members still had not received their newsletter. We will do our best to be more timely in the future, but in the meantime, your best course of action is to complain LOUDLY to your local post office.

On February 3, and hopefully at a later meeting in February, the Supervisors of Alameda County will vote on a plan that will affect the fate of all wildlife in eastern Alameda County. The proposed **East County Area Plan (ECAP)** would open up thousands of acres of open space and wildlife habitat to suburban development and would more than double the population of the Livermore Valley.

Much of eastern Alameda County is a rugged landscape punctuated by large farms and ranches. Added to this is the Livermore Valley, some of which has been rather heavily developed in recent years and the remainder of which is eyed covetously by developers who have already proposed several huge new city communities.

ECAP, as proposed, would allow farm lands and ranch lands along Mines Road, which cuts south and east from Livermore into some of the most rugged (and beautiful) areas of the county, to be broken up into 5- and 20-acre ranchettes, much smaller than currently allowed. This could be thought of as modern-day "estate" suburbanization. Added to this would be the loss of another 14,000 acres to actual suburban housing. The effect of this loss of habitat and the increased population density would be devastating to the abundant wildlife in the area. Burrowing Owls, Kit Foxes, Prairie and Peregrine falcons, to name but a few of the species found in the area, would all be at risk. The U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service says it is, "...concerned that significant adverse impacts to federally listed, proposed, and candidate species will result from activities described in the [plan]..."

The plan does not attempt to address realistically the massive traffic congestion which would result from the increased population, nor the immense cost of building the necessary roads and freeways. The Tri-Valley Transportation Council commented that, "Even if unlimited funding were available...the buildout...could not be accommodated..." The proposed development would require more water than is known to be available in an area where East Bay M.U.D. is already fighting in the courts and the legislature to prevent being compelled to provide service when it deems it cannot adequately do so and continue to service its existing customers. The plan would generate more sewage than can be handled by any realistically available system. All of this would have to be paid for by our tax dollars. The shortfall between proposed transportation improvements and foreseeable funding is over \$1 billion. This is a disaster for the citizens of Alameda County as well as for our wildlife.

Please help us stop this dreadful attack on our natural resources. Write or call your County Supervisor and ask them to vote "no" on ECAP and to do the following instead:

1. Vote for Alternative 5, which is a city-centered, more environmentally-

sound alternative.

2. Support minimum parcel sizes of 320 acres for agricultural lands.

3. Oppose the expansion of highway commute corridors such as the Toll Road (which is actually incorporated in ECAP under a different name).

Supervisors can be reached by phone as follows:

Don Perata - 272-6693

Mary King - 272-6694

Keith Carson - 272-6695

Send letters to them at:

1221 Oak Street

Oakland, CA 94612

If the supervisors pass this proposal, a referendum drive will be started to override that vote, but there will be only 30 days to get approximately 35,000 signatures. Anyone interested in helping in the referendum drive, particularly in gathering signatures, should call Fred Beddall at the Sierra Club at 653-6127. We will also have referendum petitions at the GGAS office.

Current and Future Events

February 10: February General Meeting:

A double-bill: Dave DeSante on Burrowing Owls and Japanese wetlands activists here to enlist our help. *See back cover for details.*

February 8, 9, 10: Field Ornithology Classes begin in San Francisco

Taught by Joe Morlan, the voice of the Northern California Rare Bird Alert, classes meet from 7 - 9:15 p.m. on Tuesday (Field Ornithology I: an introduction to birds and birding); Wednesday (Field Ornithology II: continuing study of shorebirds and gulls); and Thursday (Field Ornithology III: continuing study of thrashers, vireos and warblers) at Marina Middle School. Call City College of San Francisco Continuing Education Office at (415) 561-1840 for registration information.

February 17-22: California Duck Days in Davis

"A Wetlands Festival in the Heart of the Pacific Flyway." Field trips, entertainment, speakers, special events and workshops. Call (800) 425-5001 or contact Bob Barnes at (916) 481-5332..

March 4, 5, 6: Great Outdoors Fair, San Francisco

GGAS is looking for volunteers to help out in its booth (a 3-hour time commitment) at this annual extravaganza. Attend the fair for free and help spread the word about Audubon. Call the office at (510) 843-2222.

March 26-29: *Birds in the Balance* at Asilomar

National Audubon Society/Western Regional Conference for the entire family. Speakers, workshops, field trips and a

concurrent youth program. Contact Jill Shirley at (916) 481-5332 for information.

March 12: Alameda Naval Air Station's Natural Resources and Base Closure -- Planning for the Future . . . A Scientific Symposium

Sponsored by GGAS, Bay Area Audubon Council and College of Alameda, the symposium will feature presentations and discussions by scientific experts on the use of the Naval Air Station site by waterbirds, harbor seals and fish and the natural resource values and habitat requirements that are provided there. Intended primarily for policy-makers and planners, there will be limited space available for interested GGAS members. Call the office for details

Lake Merritt Wetlands Restoration

Oakland is presently considering the possibility of creating up to 2.3 acres of salt-marsh habitat at Lake Merritt, a restoration of the type of habitat that existed there at the time the lake was dredged in the 1890's. Funds for the project must be included in the municipal budget. Future issues of *The Gull* will detail what we can do to encourage this worthy project

Summer, 1994 -- Kenya Safari

Seventeen days of birds and wildlife in Kenya with Alan Hopkins. Masai Mara, Tsavo, Amboseli, Samburu, Lake Naivasha, Aberdares, North and South Coast and more. Cost: \$4,100.00. Includes round-trip air-fare from San Francisco and a \$200 donation to GGAS. Call Marcia or Tasha at Park East Tours: (800)223-6078.

Field Trips Calendar

Saturday, February 5

Lake Merced, San Francisco.

Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983.

Sunday, February 6

Lake Merritt, Oakland

Leader: Joan Zawaski (415) 433-1700 (day); (510) 530-2427 (eve.) (*)

Wednesday, February 9

Mini-trip to Coyote Hills Regional Park.

Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

For details on the above, see *The Gull* for January.

Sunday, February 13:

Los Banos Wildlife Refuge.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the refuge headquarters located three miles north of Los Banos on Henry Miller Rd., just east of Hwy. 165 intersection. We will look for White-faced Ibis, Sandhill Cranes, Bald Eagles, and a variety of waterfowl.

Allow two-and-one-half hours driving time from the Bay Area. Considering the distance involved in this trip be sure to fill your gas tank before starting, and carpool if possible. Bring lunch and warm clothes. Leaders: Peter and Dolores White (510) 229-1714. (\$ - State Refuge entrance fee). (*)

Saturday, February 19:

Briones Regional Park.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the west entrance to Briones Regional Park (off Bear Creek Rd.). Take Hwy. 24 east and exit on the Orinda turnoff, then turn left and go back under the freeway on Camino Pablo. Continue northwest about two miles to Bear Creek Rd. Turn right and drive about 4.5 miles to the Briones Regional Park entrance on the right, just beyond Happy Valley Rd. Or, from Berkeley area, cross

through Tilden Regional Park on Wildcat Canyon Rd. and continue across San Pablo Dam Rd. onto Bear Creek Rd., 4.5 miles to the park.

Meet in the parking area on the left just beyond the fee booth. Bring lunch and liquids. We will hike in hilly terrain looking for wintering birds such as Western Bluebirds, Acorn Woodpeckers, Pine Siskins, and lots more. Leader: Rusty Scalf (510) 523-7108. \$ (*)

Wednesday, March 9:

Mini-trip to Mitchell Canyon.

We will meet at 9:30 a.m.. Take Hwy. 24 through the Caldecott Tunnel. At Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Rd. exit. Turn right and go approximately 8 miles, then turn right onto Clayton Rd. Go one mile and make a right onto Mitchell Canyon Rd. and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road. (Parking outside the entrance will avoid a parking fee.)

This is a delightful area with easy streamside walking and many songbirds. Wear shoes suitable for walking in mud, and bring your lunch. Rain cancels trip.

Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman. (\$)

Plan Ahead:

Saturday, March 19

San Francisco Bird Blitz. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983.

Trips marked with \$ go to parks and other sites that require an entrance fee.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (*). See below.

Problems: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chair (510) 524-2399.

Back Yard Birder

Meg Pauletich

Now that the leaves of my weeping cherry have dropped, I've hung my seed feeder where I can easily watch it from my kitchen window. The birds love it because there are shrubs into which they can dive from predators. There's plenty of action on frosty mornings.

Glancing out the window one Sunday morning, Dick glimpsed a hawk as it streaked through the yard. With no time for study, the size and color led him to believe it was a Sharp-shinned. A few scattered feathers attested to its probable success in snagging Sunday brunch. What was awesome was its speed and the ease with which it wove between many obstacles. It may have scoped out its victim from a nearby scrub pine, then, using the element of surprise, launched itself toward its target.

Raptors in general use a number of different hunting techniques. A Peregrine Falcon uses high speed, plunging steeply downward at more than 150 mph (called stooping). It strikes from above, using its talons to take its bird prey on-the-wing. Kestrels, White-tailed Kites (no longer called Black-shouldered, just as you've gotten used to the change), and Red-tailed Hawks often hover while hunting, then drop down on their prey. Many buteos soar over vast areas where they scan for food with telescopic vision. Accipiters (Goshawks, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks) maneuver through woodlands with their shorter wings and use their long legs to grab food, mainly birds. Probably most raptor hunting is done from a perch where a simple glide can garner a meal with little energy being expended. In wintertime, when there are fewer warm thermals to ride, the telephone lines on the road to Bodega Bay are decorated with many kestrels and Red-shouldered Hawks. The latter have a characteristic hunch as they lean forward to look down for food scared up by passing cars. Like humans, most birds have a relatively poor sense of smell and use their vision as their main sense. Osprey use a perch or hover before diving into water to secure fish with their rough feet adapted for carrying slippery fish. Harriers fly low, back and forth (called "quartering") over an area scanning for food.

Lest you become dewy-eyed over the fate of helpless, sweet little song-birds being nabbed by mean old hawks, remember that this is nature's way of controlling the population of bird species.

Accipiters, the bird-catching hawks, called "The Artful Dodgers" in *Hawks in Flight* by Dunne, et al, are really what farmers call "chicken hawks." However, innocent buteos (like Red-tails) are blasted out of the air by farmers because they are conspicuous as they hunt for mice and reptiles. They take the

rap for their cousins' actions. Accipiters can weave a path in woodlands that no falcon or buteo can follow, using hair-trigger reflexes and a long, rudderlike tail to follow the twisting path of escaping songbirds. They use the element of surprise, not endurance, and quit the hunt quickly if they fail.

The Sharp-shinned Hawk is a scrappy, small hawk which loves anything feathered that is smaller than a Northern Flicker. In winter, a sharpie might stake out a feeder or two, so if you notice your birds diving for cover or freezing or getting quiet, look for a sharpie.

The Cooper's Hawk will not tolerate a Sharp-shinned in its territory, considering it just another meal. According to the above-mentioned book, "if you took a Sharp-shinned Hawk, grabbed its head and gave a steady pull, and then did the same thing to the wings, you'd have a bird that bore some resemblance to a Cooper's Hawk." Distinguishing between the two is difficult since they have similar plumage and shape. The females are larger than the males so that a female Sharp-shinned approaches the size of a male Cooper's. An observer needs to consider not just one, but a number of clues which, when taken together, will help nail down the proper bird. Here are a few:

Sharp-shinned: between robin and pigeon in size, somewhat stubby or chunky; wings short and broad with "wrist" at leading edge of wing bent; banded tail *usually* slightly notched with corners squared off; flight consists of rapid wingbeats with snappy, hurried flaps punctuated with glides.

Cooper's: crow-sized; long, lean, lanky accipiter; head is large and heavy and protrudes ahead of the wing; wings cleanly tapered with no bend at the wrist -- straight along the leading edge; banded tail almost always rounded with noticeable white band at the tip; wingbeat is slower than sharpie's with stiff movements, as if it has arthritis.

Goshawk: large, buteo-sized accipiter; looks like a flying stovepipe; wings are broad and long and taper toward tip; head is large and broad; wing beat is heavy, deep, labored. Goshawks are rare, secretive hawks of northern forests. We are unlikely to see it in our area, but keep it in mind in the Sierra.

The book I cited, *Hawks in Flight*, is an excellent guide to all sorts of clues to identifying *all* of our hawks. It's indispensable if you spend any time hawk-watching, especially during migration at Hawk Hill in Marin County. So, go out and practice, practice, practice. That's what it takes!

News from the Ranch

Dan Murphy

Edris Cole, our friend and employee for so many years, has decided to retire. Her cheerful greetings to weekend visitors and to children who come with school groups are an ACR institution. It just won't be the same toward the end of each month when I call the Ranch to see what's new. That knowing voice on the other end of the wire won't be telling me, "There's nothing new, but I know you'll think of something." Edris will join our weekend crew during the coming public season so wish her your best before she's off to yet another distant corner of the planet.

ACR docents, the core of our education program, have announced a docent exchange between the Bolinas Lagoon and Bouverie Preserves. Many of these same docents will participate in an advanced training program to get ready for the spring season. And in the fall of 1994, you can apply to join the ranks of this wonderful corps of educators when we offer a training program for new docents. Watch this column for details or get more information when you visit the Ranch this spring.

At the last ACR board meeting, Al Fisk announced that BAP docents will train a group of 5th-grade students to be junior docents. The Juniper Program will involve 25 volunteer students who have participated in field trips to BAP and who wish to share their experiences with others. They will attend five Saturday training programs before meeting the public.

Bolinas Lagoon Restoration: Have you seen Bolinas Lagoon lately? Well, the southern end looks like a lagoon again. The causeway is gone and so are the remains of the old Stinson Beach dump, some of which looked like a marsh. Remember when marshes were dumps? It's all gone thanks to a Caltrans mitigation project which came about as a result of some very hard lobbying by many people including our own Skip Schwartz. Because of their persistent efforts, a reluctant Caltrans finally proceeded with the dredging operation as mitigation for the ocean dumping of landslide material from Hwy. 1. As a result, Hwy. 1 is open south of Stinson Beach, the debris from the landslide is in the ocean, and the southern end of Bolinas Lagoon is open once more. Caltrans is now touting it as a model mitigation project and Bolinas Lagoon is enjoying a bit of renewal.

Bike Trail Removal: Some nervy mountain bikers decided ACR was just the place for a new break-neck trail from Bolinas Ridge to the Lagoon, in true disregard for everything Audubon Canyon Ranch stands for. On our last workday, about a dozen volunteers spent hours obscuring the trail; hopefully winter will remove any remaining traces. Our staff will continue monitoring the area.

U.N. Biosphere Reserve: This column keeps mentioning that ACR is a world-class preserve with world-class programs. It seems others agree: Audubon Canyon Ranch has been

designated a World Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations.

Volunteer Opportunities at Tomales Bay

1. Harbor Seal Monitoring will pick up again in the spring. We need volunteers who can commit to being in the field on at least 5 days between March and July. Not only will you count all the Harbor Seals that Tomales Bay can supply; you get to monitor pupping success, record human impacts and be part of a very important research project. For more information call Mary Ellen King at (707)537-1546 or John Kelly at (415) 663-8203.

2. Spring Shorebird Counts are coming up at Tomales Bay. This is a chance to check out all those migrating shorebirds when they are in breeding (alternate) plumage and, if you pay attention, they are actually pretty easy to tell apart. But don't worry, there will be enough in winter (basic) plumage to keep you on your toes. John Kelly needs the help of knowledgeable shorebird watchers. You don't need to be a pro, but you should have a pretty good idea of what you're looking at. A scope is necessary for this project. Call John for further information.

3. Heron Observers Needed: ACR is currently conducting an annual inventory of over 60 Heron/Egret colony sites in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, Solano, and Contra Costa counties. Volunteer field observers will gather data on colony size, nesting behaviors, and reproductive success. This year we plan to develop additional information on the vulnerability of colonies to disturbance. Orientation meeting at Marin County Humane Society on Wednesday, February 2nd, at 7:30 p.m.. Call Cypress Grove Preserve at (415) 663-8203 for more information. (Ed. **Note:** this meeting date is perilously close to *The Gull's* mailing date -- do not let late arrival of the newsletter deter you from volunteering for this project.)

ACR's Public Season begins again in mid-March. Unpack the picnic basket and get ready. We'll need volunteer hosts as always. Why not plan ahead by calling the office at (415)868-9244, or better yet, volunteer through Golden Gate Audubon.

Free Lunch! Yes, if the public season is upon us it must be time for another work day. That would be on Saturday, March 5. Join the ACR staff and friends in spring preserve cleaning. As your reward you'll spend a day in the field, meet some great people, and best of all is that free lunch! Call the office at (415)868-9244.

Guided nature walks at Bouverie Audubon Preserve will be scheduled through the spring. Call (707)938-4554 for further information.

I traveled to Mexico this month, to the Sierra Madre east of Mazatlan and to San Blas, south on the coast somewhat more than midway between Mazatlan and Puerto Vallarta. The birding was terrific -- a healthy mix of our summer migrants and more exotic tropical species -- but even to those of us who had never been there before, it was evident that there were severe problems. The jungle is being cut, sometimes in small patches, sometimes in great swaths, mostly to plant cash crops like bananas. And many of the species were present in far fewer numbers than we would have expected, not all of which can be attributed to decreased habitat. The fact is that a lot of birds, particularly the meaty ones, are being shot, leaving the survivors a very wary lot. One does not usually think of skulking jays, but the Mexican varieties certainly don't flock to the nearest peanut butter sandwich; they slip, not always quietly, from tree to tree and stay well away from humans. And many birds are still being captured for the caged bird market -- we passed one group of roadside vendors where parrots and Painted Buntings among others were being hawked. There is no one answer to the problem, but perhaps with NAFTA (which is rapidly assuming the proportions of a pie-in-the-sky panacea) some pressure can be brought on the Mexican government to enforce the Migratory Bird Treaty.

The past month has seen a mix of the usual winter scarcities as well as a couple of real rarities. Christmas counts and other reports from coastal areas turned up fewer than normal pelagic birds, although the species list is representative: Northern Fulmar, Pink-footed, Sooty, Short-tailed, and Black-vented shearwaters, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Pomerine Jaegers, Marbled and Ancient murrelets, Cassins and Rhinoceros auklets and a single Tufted Puffin on Monterey Bay (DLSh). The prize would have to go to the **Wedge-tailed Shearwater**, found on the Santa Cruz Christmas count on the 18th (DLSh, SA fide BBrr). The species breeds on the Revilla

Gegido islands off the west coast of Mexico as well as on the Hawaiian islands; the first North American record was in Monterey Bay in 1986 and there have been a few subsequent sightings including one three years ago on the Point Reyes Christmas count. A **Yellow-billed Loon** was off the Pacific Grove shore on the 27th and 28th (DLSh). And on January 9th, an Ashy and a Leach's Storm-Petrel were inside San Francisco Bay, seen from the Hayward Shoreline (RJR).

There are good numbers of Eurasian Wigeons, Oldsquaws, Barrow's Golden-eyes, and Hooded Mergansers throughout the extended Bay Area. Three groups of **Tufted Ducks** were reported: two males and a female in Sunnyvale (SCR, MJM, MMR); a pair in Corte Madera (RBu fide DSi); and a male at Lake Merced (ASH, mob). Harlequin Ducks continued to be seen at Point Reyes (RS, DES, JM); another one was a Christmas Day present in Monterey (ACup).

A **Gyrfalcon**, found at the end of October, continued to be seen in Del Norte County (ADB, mob); the immature individual in eastern Alameda County was last reported on the 14th (RJR, GFi). A driver returning to the Bay Area from Los Angeles along I-5 just after Thanksgiving counted a total of seventy-three dead Barn Owls alongside the highway between Bakersfield and the north side of Tracy (STh), giving rise to the question of what rendered these birds so vulnerable to collisions with vehicles.

The thundering hordes travel to Palo Alto Baylands on the days of the winter high tides to look for Black Rails; on December 12th, some very persistent searching turned up a **Yellow Rail** in addition to the Blacks (SFB, DEQ). The news of two Clapper Rails in northern

San Mateo County, found on the S. F. Christmas count, was greeted with great joy: this is the first time in many years that this declining species has been found so close to San Francisco (HG).

There were some Ruffs around: four in Kings County (JSe) and one each at Castroville (fide DSg, fide DR), northern Marin (JH fide AD), and the Oakland Airport (LJP). Six Wilson's Phalaropes at the S. F. Bay NWR were definitely unseasonal (MiF). A total of eleven Glaucous Gulls was reported.

Five Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were

Last fall, after a Prothonotary Warbler seen by dozens of people went unreported for 24 hours, the Rare Bird Alert elected to discontinue the weekly update in favor of making it easier to report sightings of notable birds. It hasn't been a universally popular decision. However, those people who eschew dialing in daily and who have access to some of the current technological marvels can either download the daily update from the Airtight Garage BBS at (415) 641-0348 or receive it by fax by leaving their number on either of the bird alert lines.

reported from Moss Landing to Point Reyes to Davis (SH, BL, JW fide DWm, LLu, DR fide DSg). And there was a flurry of flycatchers: two Pacific-slopes in Santa Cruz County (DSg); an Eastern Phoebe at Moss Landing (fide DSg, MiF); an Ash-throated Flycatcher in San Francisco (DSg); Tropical Kingbirds in Santa Cruz (MiF) and San Francisco (ASH, DF, JM); and a Cassin's Kingbird at Paicines Reservoir in San Benito County (SA fide DSg). A visit to Monticello Dam in Solano County the day after Christmas produced four species of wren (Bewick's, Rock, Canyon and House) and an American Dipper (LLu).

Mountain Bluebirds have been reported in good numbers. A Townsend's Solitaire was sighted on Mt. Tam on the 31st (GC fide DSi); Sage Thrashers were found in Santa Cruz County (fide DSg) and Panoche Valley (DSg, IMac); and a single **Bohemian Waxwing** showed up in Arcata on the 18th (JCS). Can redpolls and Snowy Owls be far behind?

Observations

There were surprising numbers of unusual warblers around considering that this is the middle of winter: five Tennessee; twenty-three Nashville; two Virginia's (JCS, fide DSh); three Lucy's (SBT, fide DSg, DR); seven Yellow; two Black-throated Gray; one Black-throated Green in Arcata from the 18th to the 27th (JCS, mob); two Prairie, San Francisco and Watsonville, (PJM, DSg); forty-three Palm; seven Black-and-White; four American Redstarts; two Northern Waterthrushes (JCS, ASH, RS); and six Wilson's. We have some spring months where we don't do as well.

A Summer Tanager spent the month at Laguna Honda Hospital in San Francisco (DSg, ASH); and three Western Tanagers were around, two in San Francisco and one in Novato (DPM, MHe, HK). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in Shasta County (BY) and a Black-headed Grosbeak was in Oakland (BLc fide DEQ).

Chipping Sparrows generally flee this area in the winter, so it was quite a

surprise to find up to forty in Solano County (LLu, FGB, SGI) and another one in western Sonoma (fide RS). Clay-colored Sparrows numbered four: one each in Hayward (HLC, PEG) and Ano Nuevo (RSTh) and two in Humboldt County (JCS). The find-of-the-month award has to go to the **Field Sparrow** that showed up in Martinez on January 4th (DWi, mob). Fairly common in the mid-part of the country, they migrate only short distances and consequently are exceedingly rare on the west coast: this is the fourth record for the state and the only mainland record for Northern California. Another oddity was a Grasshopper Sparrow along the San Mateo coast at the end of December (RSTh). There were a few Sharp-tailed and lots of Swamp and White-throated sparrows around. Five Harris' Sparrows, including one in Danville (DJ) and one along Putah Creek (KvG, mob) are also worth noting. A Snow Bunting in Crescent City (JCS, MiF) again raises the

spectre of an invasion from the north -- what the heck, think Boreal Chickadee.

A Hooded Oriole in Martinez was another winter anomaly (AW, RAR). And the month rounds out with some Red Crossbills and a few Evening Grosbeaks.

Observers:

Steve Allison, Stephen F. Bailey, Bruce Barrett, Alan D. Barron, Florence G. Bennett, Richard Buckberg, Glen Clifton, Howard L. Cogswell, Art Cupples, Ann Dewart, Mike Feighner, George Finger, David French, Steve Glover, Philip E. Gordon, Helen Green, Kevin Guse, S. Hampton, Michael Healy, Alan S. Hopkins, Joel Hornstein, David Jesus, Harrison Karr, Brian Lenz, Bob Lewis (BLc), Leslie Lieurance, Michael J. Mammoser, Ian MacGregor, Joe Morlan, Dan P. Murphy, David E. Quady, Robert J. Richmond, Don Roberson, Mike M. Rogers, Steve C. Rottenborn, Ruth A. Rudesill, Don E. Schmoldt, Jeff Seay, Debra Love Shearwater, Dianne Sierra (DSi), Dan Singer (DSg), Rich Stallcup, John C. Sterling, Scott B. Terrill, Ronald S. Thorn, Steven Thornburgh, Allan Wight, Denise Wight (DWi), David Wimpfheimer (DWm), Jon Winter, Bob Yutzy.

Data thanks to Joe Morlan and the Northern California Rare Bird Alert.

Gifts and Bequests

Stefanie Arthur
George and Virginia Bing
Jane Dang, in memory of Judy Olson
Joel Fontaine
Miriam Marsh Fontaine
Harriet "Hap" Fraser
Gap Foundation
Stephen Hahn
Gregg Hauser
Hesperornis Fund

Michael and Jane Larkin
Anne Macpherson
Martha Maricle
Mary and Robert Mayer
H. Arlen Monteau
Doris Sloan
John Weinstein
Mr. & Mrs. E. William Yund
Olive Zanc

The Society welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use for general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society including Audubon Canyon Ranch of which GGAS is a sponsor. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G., Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in The Gull as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.

FEBRUARY MEETING: A DOUBLE BILL

STATUS OF THE BURROWING OWL and WETLAND ACTIVISTS FROM JAPAN

Audubon chapters throughout the Bay Area have participated for the past three years in the Burrowing Owl Project led by David DeSante of the Institute for Bird Populations. Dr. DeSante will present a slide show on the results of this study at our February program in Berkeley. The program will begin at 7:30 p.m., **Thursday, February 10th**, at the Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda. Many GGAS members assisted with the project by censusing Burrowing Owls in the study area which encompassed the San Francisco Bay Area and the central portion of the Central Valley.

Dr. DeSante is still analyzing the second and third years of data, but expects to complete the analysis before the program so we will be among the first to learn the results of the three-year study. According to Dr. DeSante, "The first year of the study indicated that Burrowing Owls had declined by over 50%. Observers were unable to find 50% of the birds known to be in the study area the previous decade." The decline is of serious concern since the study area contains two of four major Burrowing Owl population areas in California. A total of about 900 pairs of owls was found in the Bay and Central Valley areas studied.

Dr. DeSante will also discuss the natural history and habits of this fascinating species. We will learn about the threats faced by Burrowing Owls, the causes of their decline, and what conservation actions are needed to ensure that the captivating Burrowing Owl continues to exist in our area.

David DeSante is currently Director of the Institute for Bird Populations, which he founded. He was formerly Director of Land Bird Research at the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, and has taught at Stanford University and Reed College. He became interested in the plight of this species while working on a project to relocate Burrowing Owls. While monitoring the results of the relocation project, he became convinced that a comprehensive census was needed to understand the status and threats to Burrowing Owl populations and to develop a conservation strategy.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society is honored to be chosen as one of the organizations to which three wetlands activists from Japan will make a presentation. Wetlands in Japan have been disappearing almost as rapidly as in the U.S.. The city of Fukuoka, Oakland's sister city, is located on Hakata Bay, whose tidal marshes and mudflats support over 300 species of birds including several endangered species such as Black-faced Spoonbills.

An 800-acre artificial island is now being proposed for those mudflats and marshes. Over 120,000 letters have been sent to the Fukuoka government opposing this development and have been ignored as the project continues to gather steam. Japanese environmentalists are now looking to international pressure to save the day. Japan is evidently much more sensitive to how the world views it than to the views of its own citizens. Come and hear Yoshino Ito, Ryoichi Hori and Nial Moores describe their plight and learn what we can do to help save this very important migratory bird habitat.

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As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

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